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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000408

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: DHLAKAMA; A POLITICAL OBITUARY

REF: 08 MAPUTO 1291

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Classified By: CHARGE TODD CHAPMAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama responded to RENAMO's poor showing in the November 19 municipal elections by secluding himself, even from senior party members. When he returned to the spotlight, his erratic behavior embarrassed himself and his party. RENAMO, and Dhlakama in particular, have fallen seriously out of favor with Mozambican voters; few Mozambicans appear to take Dhlakama seriously. Despite President Guebuza's apparent willingness to prop up the demoralized RENAMO leader, Dhlakama's refusal to release the reins of power in his own party has resulted in mass desertions, many to the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) party of Daviz Simango. END SUMMARY.

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DHLAKAMA QUIET, UNTIL JANUARY  
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12. (C) Immediately after the November 19 elections RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama went into seclusion, unreachable by senior party members and old friends alike. In late 2008 Jaime Gonsalves, the Archbishop of Beira, approached the Charge, requesting that that Charge attempt to reach Dhlakama, as no one else could. In mid-January Dhlakama reappeared and began giving interviews to the press, saying that he rejected the results of the elections, and that his mayors and municipal council members who had been defeated would not step down. He proposed holding a parallel swearing-in ceremony and a parallel government, which never materialized. At the same time RENAMO submitted a rambling 650 page manifesto to the Constitutional Council which contained vague and unsubstantiated claims of vote rigging and unfair electoral laws. The manifesto was immediately rejected on procedural grounds. A delegation of senior RENAMO figures then made the rounds of the diplomatic circuit, speaking with Poloffs on January 12 in an effort to gather support for RENAMO's election concerns. In the February 12 run-off elections, RENAMO was again soundly beaten.

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RENAMO FAITHFUL LEAVING DHLAKAMA  
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13. (C) On January 26, Dhlakama reversed his previous policy of refusing to publicly interact with President Guebuza, calling on the President to join him in a debate of the political situation and the "electoral crime of the November 19 elections." On January 27 Guebuza accepted Dhlakama's invitation, but said he would not discuss alterations to Mozambique's laws or Constitution. Dhlakama's about-face on

public debate seems to be another example of his growing irrationality. In post-election televised interviews, Dhlakama appears confused and distracted, even at times forgetting the names of his senior RENAMO leadership. Dhlakama compares himself to Mandela, Gandhi, and others, most recently stating that "I am the Obama of Mozambique." Members of RENAMO, including Maria Moreno, head of RENAMO's Parliamentary banc, have distanced themselves from the increasingly erratic leader. Many RENAMO insiders believe the party is dead, with Dhlakama publicly sacking Moreno and privately kicking out many other RENAMO members. Party political leaders believe public support is at its lowest level ever, due in large part to the poor stewardship of Dhlakama.

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COMMENT: DHLAKAMA WRITING HIS OWN POLITICAL OBITUARY  
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¶4. (C) RENAMO's leader appears weak and demoralized following the party's overwhelming loss in the municipal elections. He is increasingly isolated, out of touch, the butt of many jokes, and sidelined by his own party. Many argue that Guebuza's agreement to debate is another example of the president attempting to lend credibility to Dhlakama, propping up a weak, but well-known, opponent. While Dhlakama desperately needs Guebuza's support, both financial and political, that support may not be enough. Although Dhlakama and many of the old guard of RENAMO (known as the "former combatants") are unlikely to withdraw quietly from politics, a new generation of Mozambicans has no tangible connections to these largely historic figures. MDM, led by Daviz Simango, is well positioned to absorb the youth of RENAMO: young RENAMO politicians have already made a clean break from the party and are increasingly backing MDM's leader Daviz

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Simango. Simango carries the pedigree of his father, Urias, an early leader of FRELIMO, lending credibility to his candidacy while allowing him to run on a platform of hope and change.  
Chapman